

How to design a climate assembly for systemic change?

Tartu Climate Assembly, EST

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Green Tiger Foundation

Platform for cross-sectoral cooperation
with the aim of helping to create a vision and plan of
balanced economy for Estonia
and to reach a social agreement for its
implementation.

Climate assemblies as **the way** to improve
the **HOW** part of the **systemic change** .





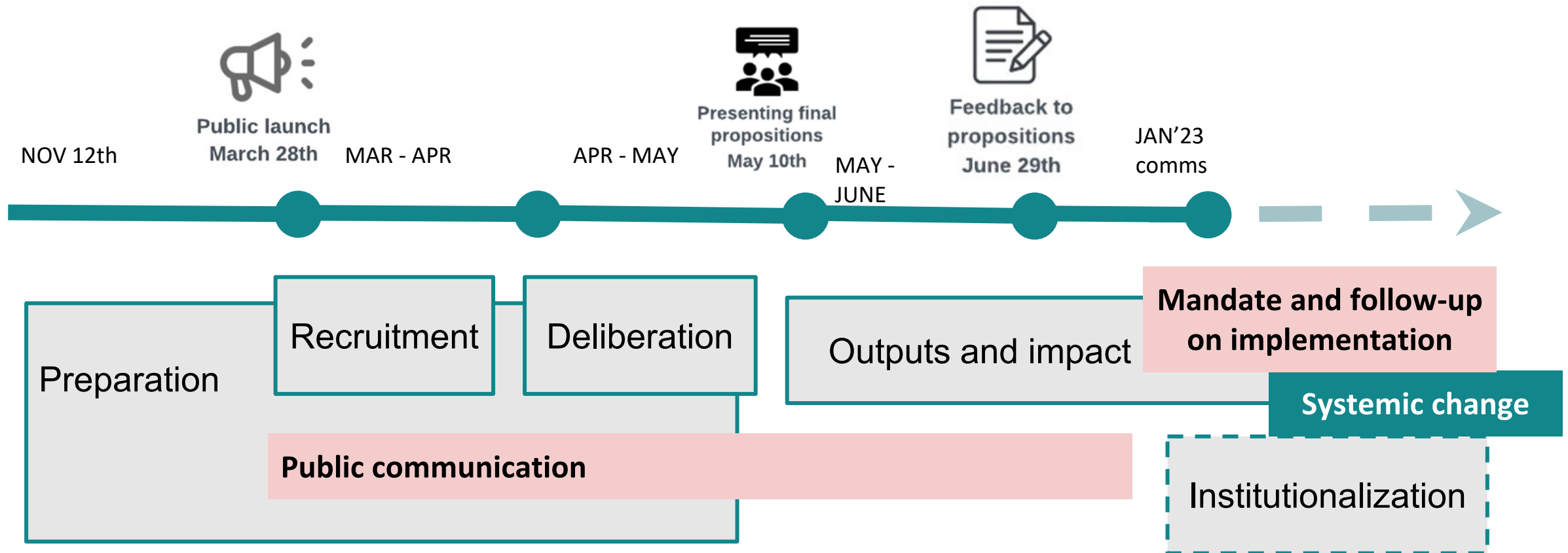
t: How to make the urban space safer and more attractive?

Tartu's Climate Assembly
April–May 2022

Tartu Climate Assembly goals:

1. To improve sustainable mobility in co-creation with the residents of Tartu.
1. Pilot the climate assembly as an innovative decision-making format for the implementation of the Tartu climate and energy strategy.

Tartu climate assembly: process view



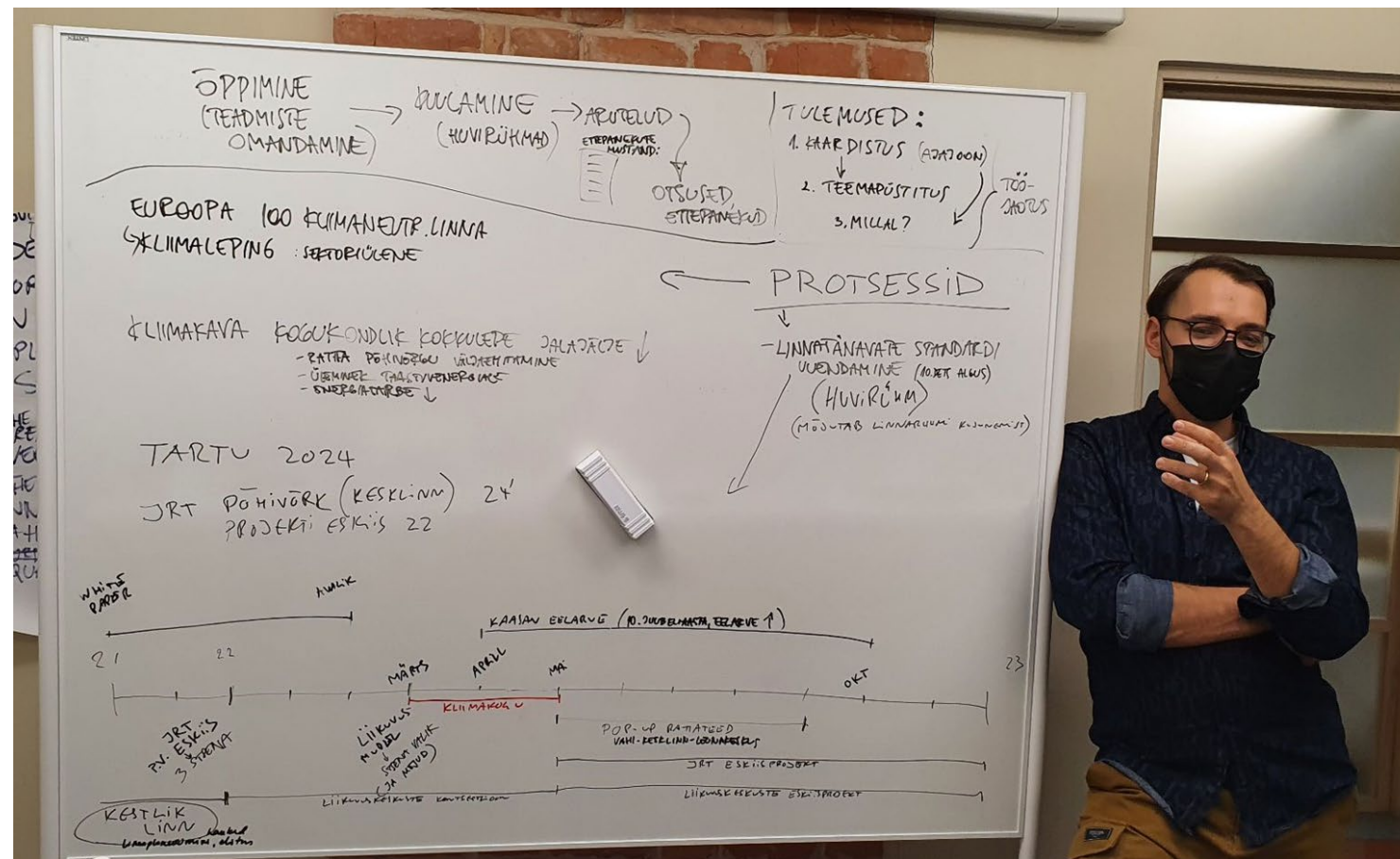
Preparation

Commissioner:

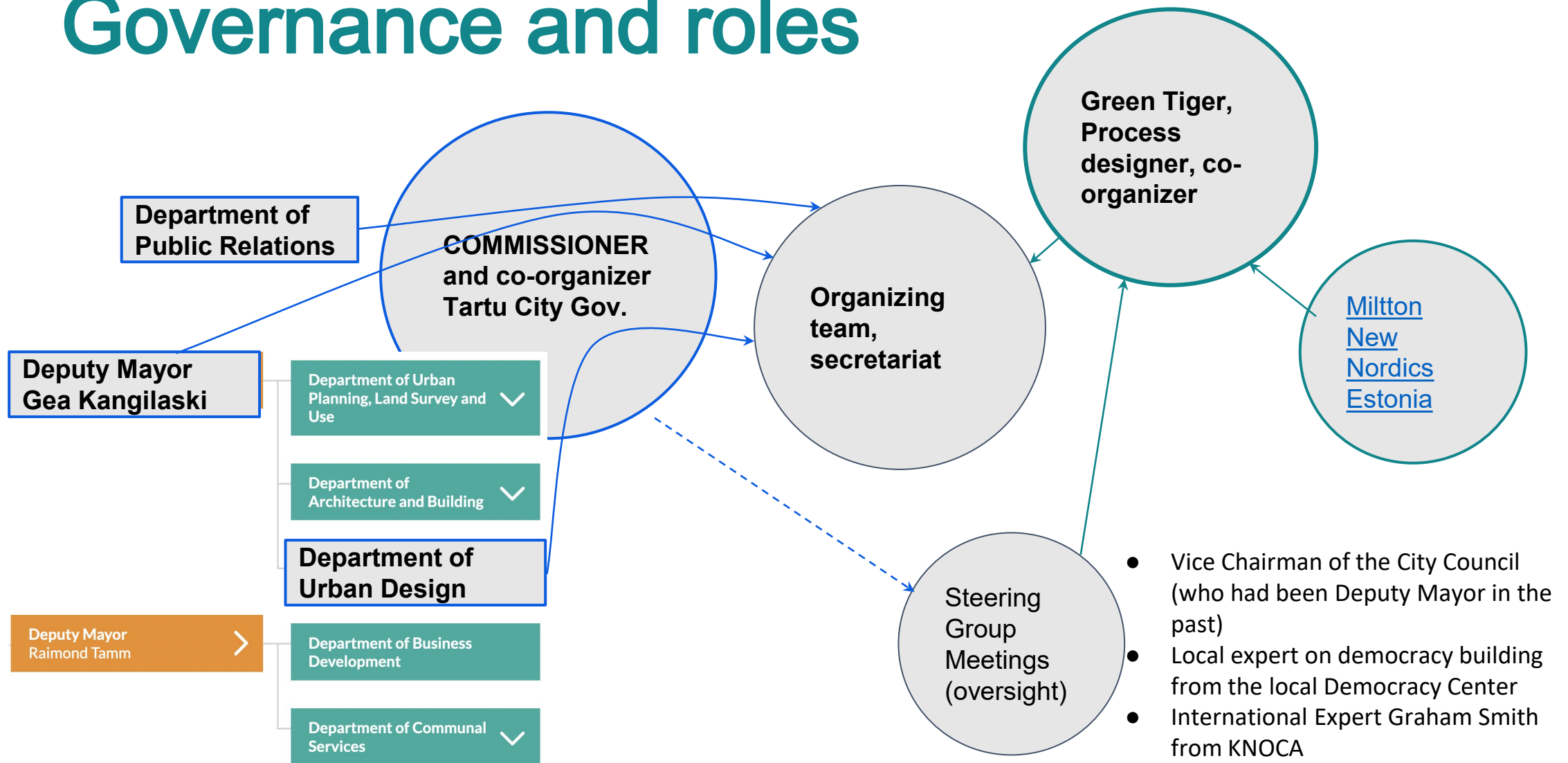
Tartu City Architect and
the Department of Urban
Planning

Co-creating the Rulebook

- > overview of the process
- > transparency to the public
- > based on the Centre for Blue Democracy rulebooks (Mostar case!) and international citizens' assembly standards



Governance and roles





Going public and getting a mandate

- Presentations to the City Government, coalition party representatives, City Council committees (environment, urban planning and development, economic affairs)
- Invite to politicians to observe the process

Reality:

- “Asking opinion” VS delegating decision-making, very low expectations towards engaging citizens.
- Committees not interested, only 2 deputy mayors got to feel the assembly's atmosphere.
- Vice chairman of the council quite passive member of steering group.



Recruitment: results and learnings

The purpose of random sortition is to include specific groups who are usually left out and create a deliberation between a very different residents.

Results:

- No drop-outs during deliberation!
- Positive, supportive, friendly vibe!
- The mini-public deliberated amongst people different from themselves - positive feedback (and learnings) from participants, cross-section of the population

Next time:

- communicate better the value and importance of bringing together a diversity of voices, less focus on random selection technical details.
 - > Some groups were underrepresented
- use different channels and messages/calls to action with different target groups. Plan budget to send out letters, find contacts who help reach difficult groups
 - > The invite attracted those who already were deeply worried about the climate.

The feeling of Climate Assembly





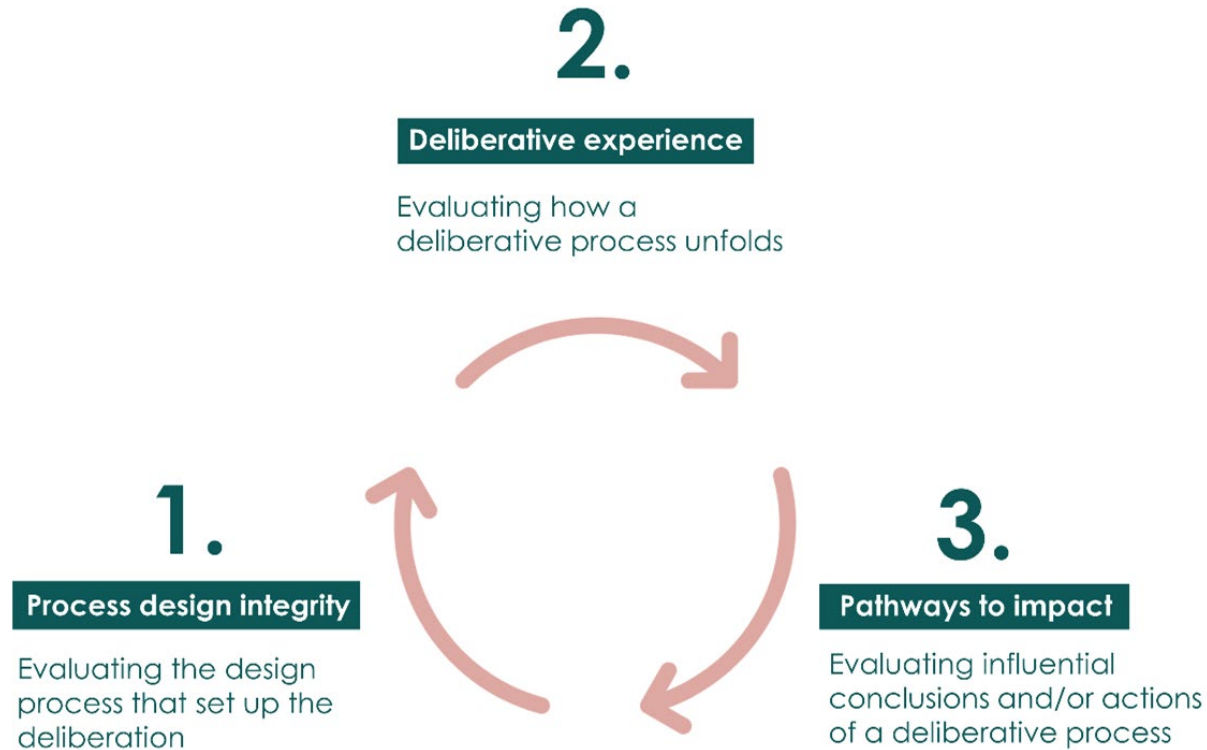
Deliberation: results and lessons

Next time:

- Important to get the politicians and officials to see the deliberations. They will understand the process when they feel it on site.
- Give the commissioning body roles during the events, even small tasks.
- Design special pre-process-engagement for public officials, who are going to implement the proposals. Take time to meet and test the messages with key politicians and political fractions.

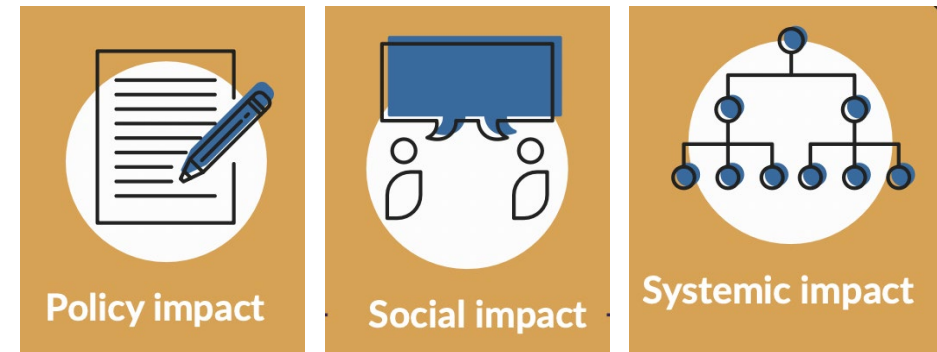
Outputs and impact:

Evaluation



Source: *OECD Evaluation guidelines for representative deliberative processes*

Recognize different forms of impact:



Source: *KNOCA Brief on Key drivers of impact - How to unleash the potential of climate assemblies.*

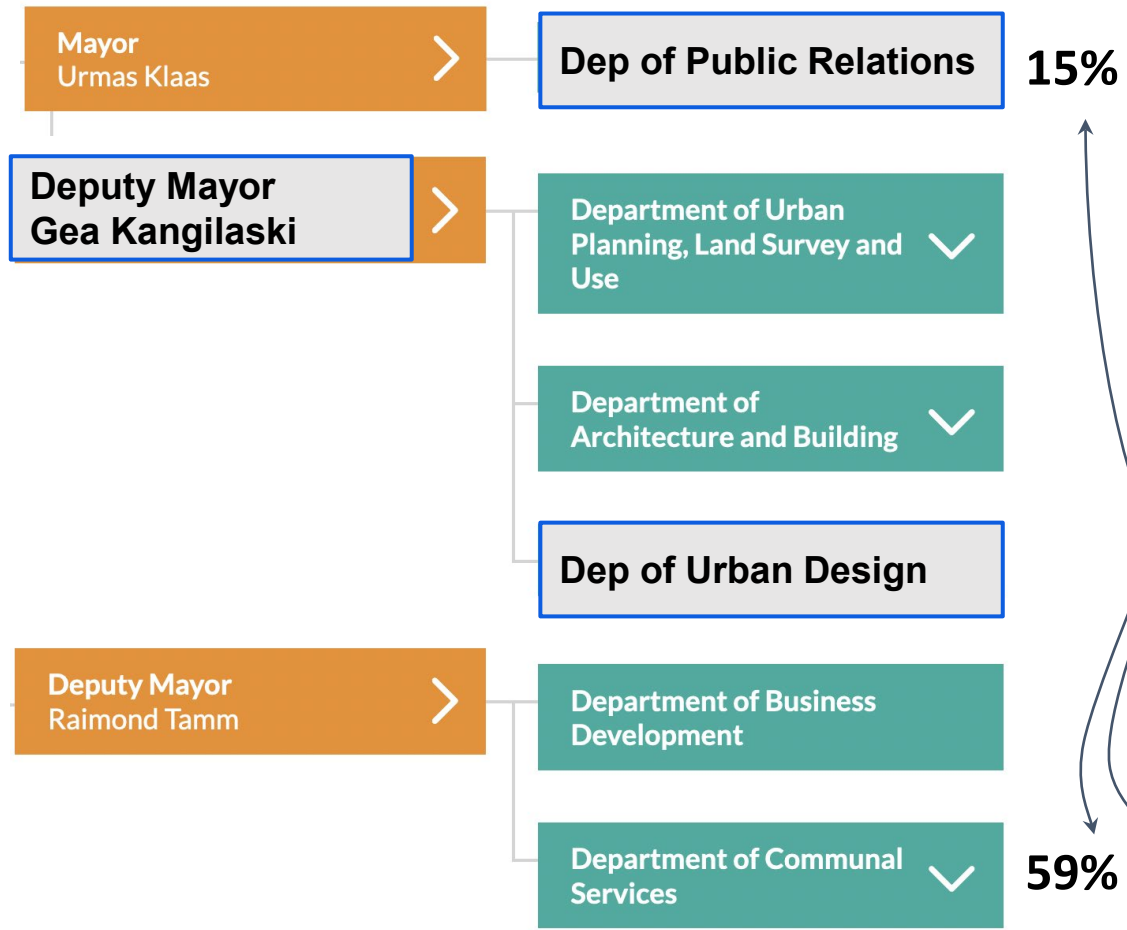
Outputs and Impacts: **feedback**



“Good to know officials are not stonefaces, but real regular people.” - a participant of the assembly

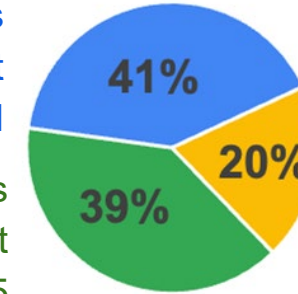
Outputs and Impacts: Feedback

Implementation phase (june 2022)



Proposition complements investments, plans, projects that are already being implemented

Doable in the frames of current budget period 2022-2025



Need for broader discussion for changing Budget strategy.

Commissioning Department responsible for implementing **73%** of propositions. Of those: 2/3 need **co-operation** with other departments to make the impact.

Dep of Education 3%



Outputs and Impacts: Policy impact

Impact was to **reveal several contradictions** hindering deliberative innovation:

- Opened a broader discussion about the roles of institutions, experts and citizens in a representative democracy. Contradiction between legislative system and institutions, and **political culture**.
- “We can start out small to build up momentum for more systemic changes.” Project ideas VS new course of action.
- One-off engagement habit VS follow-up as everyday practice.

Results :

- + Commissioning department working on ways to systematically connect CA propositions to budgetary plans, negotiations and decisions in City Council.
- + CA as mechanism to elicit informed preferences. Additional supportive argument for policy choices.

Next time:

- Need for more research and co-operation with public policy innovation experts.

Outputs and Impacts: Social impact



Goal: Raised awareness and support of the wider public for **prioritising** sustainable mobility developments in urban planning.

Immediate impact on public awareness very weak.

Difficult context and systemic disinterest by media.

Key impact factor is communication strategy throughout the whole process and beyond.



Outputs and Impacts: Systemic impact

1/2

Aimed to raise awareness and knowledge, Urban Planning department wished for educated and inspired agents amongst the community.

Positive immediate impact regarding participants

- Better informed on strategic goals of Tartu City Government and Urban Planning.
- Better knowledge on sustainable mobility in urban settings -
>Stronger self-confidence as a citizen, to take part in discussions and offer their opinions
- Raised interest in sustainable policy making
- (regained) Hope for public engagement processes
- Human contact with officials

Outputs and Impacts: Systemic impact 1/2

Empowered public officials:

- + Regained trust in citizens
- + Enriched view on engagement and decision making together with community residents
- + TBC - CA as institutionalized way of engaging residents planned for 100 Climate neutral cities mission actionplans.
- + Plan to renew engagement strategy in the light of learnings, on hold for budget negotiations.

Politicians:

- + Government level interested, raised awareness and knowledge, but lack of vision for institutionalizing.
- No impact on City Council level. Remaining caution for engaging residents, distrust in valuable effects of random sortition and deliberative process design.
“If the proposals end up in the same political system and processes, nothing will change.”



Dare we think about Institutionalization?

- Motivation for reflection on political culture
- Change in decision-making processes in City Government and City Council
- Change in officials' duties to 1) have resources for CA and 2) have enough time/capacity to “keep the communication flow open” with the public & cooperation partners
- Regained public trust in government
- Interest and acknowledgement from the public and local media.

*Optimistic timeframe for change: elections for Local Government in Oct **2025***





What to consider:

- How to frame the desired change of governance for civil servants and politicians?
- What kind of impacts are possible and desired?
- What can you do to open up public bodies for systemic innovation of policy making?
- How to focus and structure recommendations?